

A so-called “OpenChannel™” conference is established by separating particular participants of the conference from those participants that are actually currently active in the conference. This establishes a type of virtual conference, i.e., meeting, that can be monitored by participants, i.e., users, without requiring them to be actively a part of the conference call. These particular participants are in a so-called monitor mode. These participants can readily change their state from the monitor mode to a listen mode or active mode, as desired. One advantage of this invention is that a long-term conference of months or even years duration can be set up, only incurring a cost to participants when they are active participants in the conference call.